

THE MORNING NEWS

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Aruba pays tribute to "El Liberatador" Gilberto Francois "Betico" Croes (1938-1986)



Governor Refunjol arrives

On Saturday, January 25, Aruba celebrated the memory of Gilberto Francois, "Betico" Croes, the man credited with being the final, primary instrument in cementing Aruba's independence from the other nations of the Netherlands Antilles, or "Status Aparte." Born on this date in 1938, he indelibly left his mark on the destiny of an island nation.

The Aruban independence movement, which began before the WW II, sought to establish the island as a self-ruled entity within the Dutch Kingdom. It was the effort of many island



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leaders, but it was "Betico" who grasped the baton of independence and held it high, never wavering until it was finally realized in 1985, and came fully into effect on January 1, 1986.

Originally a headmaster, "Betico" Croes pursued this career upon returning from Holland with his degree in 1959, but became politically active in 1967 with the AVP party, and eventually started the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo (MEP) in 1971. He is credited with instilling in islanders a strong national pride, instigating the inauguration of an Aruban flag and national anthem in 1976. Sadly, He was gravely injured in a car accident on December 31, 1985, the eve of Aruba officially attaining Status Aparte, and after 11 months in a coma, passed away.

Arubans celebrate their first holiday of the year in a variety of ways, beginning early in the day with neighborhood bike rallies, historical tours of Oranjestad, and open houses with special exhibits at Aruba's major museums.

The day ended with the official government ceremony honoring his memory, conducted annually at the Plaza Betico Croes, directly behind the Cas di Cultura at the eastern end of Oranjestad.

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Aides: Stymied Obama aims to bypass Congress

WASHINGTON (AFP) - President Barack Obama will serve notice in his State of the Union address he intends to bypass Congress whenever necessary to regain initiative after a year of debilitating legislative logjams, aides said yesterday.

"I think what we saw last year in 2013 was a Washington that did not deliver for the American people," White House spokesman Jay Carney said in an interview with ABC's "This Week."

"And the president sees this as a year of action -- to work with Congress where he can, and to bypass Congress where necessary -- to lift folks who want to come up into the middle class," he said.

Obama's speech before Congress Tuesday evening might be his last chance to reclaim political momentum before midterm elections, after a disastrous year locked in battle with a recalcitrant Congress, and struggling with the bungled launch of his signature health care reforms.

A new Washington Post/ABC poll published yesterday found that the president's approval ratings now stand at 46 percent, up from a low of 42 percent in November but still lower than at the start of any previous year of his five-year-old presidency.

Only 37 percent of those polled said they had either a

good amount or a great deal of confidence in Obama's decision-making, and 63 percent said they did not.

In Sunday talk shows, the president's aides attributed the setbacks to the failure of legislative initiatives to make it through the Congress, where Republicans control the House.

"I think the way we have to think about this year is we have a divided government," said White House communications director Dan Pfeiffer on "Fox News Sunday."

"The Republican Congress is not going to rubber-stamp the president's agenda. So we have to find areas where we can work together and extend unemployment benefits for 1.6 million Americans. Pass the farm bill, pass immigration reform, infrastructure."

"But also the president will say to the country he's not going to wait. He's going to have the pen and he's going to use those to move the ball forward to create opportunity."

Republican Senator Rand Paul, a conservative libertarian, said the White House vow to bypass Congress when necessary "sounds vaguely like a threat."

"It's hard to convince people to get legislation through. It takes consensus. But that's what he needs to be doing, is building consensus and not taking his pen and creating law."

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Aruba pays tribute to "El Liberatador"

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PM, Governor, Ministers and Parliamentarians

All major island dignitaries, including Governor Fredis Refunjol, foreign consuls, and much of the public attend, including G.F. "Betico's" family. Wreaths were placed in tribute at the base of his statue by President and Secretary of Parliament Marisol Lopez-Tromp and Jacqueline Bastiaan-Sherman on behalf of Parliament, followed by Prime Minister Mike Eman and Secretary of the Cabinet of Ministers Nicole Hoevertsz, representing the Government of Aruba.

Finally, five of his grandchildren, Gilberto III, Mario, Lara, Tiara and Francesca,

placed a wreath on behalf of the family, and his namesake, Gilberto III, with his cousin Evelyn Wever-Croes, who now heads MEP, did so on behalf of the Foundation Betico Croes.

Minister of Tourism, Transport, Primary Sector and Culture, Otmar Oduber, spoke of the key role "Betico" played in the public's continued appreciation of its cultural legacy. A strong promoter of traditional music and folkloric dance, he encouraged the Dande Society and festival over 40 years ago, to revitalize interest in one of Aruba's authentic native musical forms. The family musical

group he began with his many brothers and sisters, still continues to perform, known as Grupo di Betico. It is dedicated to the Dande and other traditional island music.

"Betico's" daughter, Glendeline Croes, came to the podium to speak of his respect and promotion among the community of familial relationships, and the foundation they build for a society.

She was followed by Prime Minister Eman, who though the leader the political party which was MEP's principal opponents, cited that leaders like

G.F. Croes "transcend politics, to touch all the community, no matter what their political affiliation." He likened "Betico" to "Polaris, the North Star. He was a point from which we could lay our course, leading his people to a better future and prosperity for all."

The official celebration of Dia di Betico began at 5:00 PM with the formal tribute, then continued with a delightful evening of traditional and contemporary music and dance at the plaza's band shell. The festive event opened with a performance by young vocalist Xenon Daal. The playbill consisted of dance groups Nos Cultura, Baile di Chaz, and Super Dancers. The public was also treated to performances by the newly selected Children's Roadmarch Queen, "Dancing Princess" Lacey Albus and her winning song "Jump on the Bus," along with Youth Roadmarch King, "King Size," Joshua Bryson with his song "60 is Kippenvel (Goosebumps)" in honor of Aruba's Diamond Jubilee Carnival. This year, the landmark carnival theme was integrated into and dominated the cultural show. Popular bands Youth Xtreme, and multi-crowned Roadmarch King, Claudius Phillips, best known as "Mighty Talent," finished off the evening.



Glendeline Croes, daughter of G.F. Betico Croes



Mrs. Claret Refunjol with Consul from Costa Rica Cecilia Arends



Granchildren place the wreath on behalf of the family



Evelyn Wever Croes and Gilberto III on behalf of foundation



PM Eman and Nicole Hoevertsz

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Government is working towards all MFA's covering their own expenses



ORANJESTAD -- Minister of Finance Juan David Yrausquin has explained that SOGA is investing a total of 22.8 million Aruban florins in the Multi-functional Facilities (MFA). They are in charge of the process of construction and

maintenance just as they are for the SIAD at Camacuri and the DIP/DOW complex at Wayaca. In this manner APFA has the possibility for investing her funds and the government can contribute to this.

It is the government's intention to cover the cost of the rent by means of the income from transactions being made by these Multi-functional Facilities. The intention is that each MFA public department such as Census, Tax and offices like the AZV and FCCA will be allowed space to attend to the public. The Utility companies already have agreements made, likewise the Auxiliary Government Offices.

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A festive ambiance at Paseo Herencia for "Dia di Betico"



Candy Rasmijn and Inga Dijkhoff show the definitive Betico biography

ORANJESTAD -- One of the most unique aspects of Paseo Herencia (which literally means Heritage Walk) Mall in Palm Beach, is its determination to share the culture and history of Aruba and the accomplishments of islanders with visitors to the shopping center.

The halls and walls of the mall recount important aspects of the island, punctuated by entertaining and free special events that celebrate these themes. On Saturday, January 25, the mall brought "Betico Day," which commemorates the birth date of one of the island's great statesman, Gilberto Francois "Betico" Croes, to Palm Beach, for the enjoyment of islanders and vacationers alike.

Though "Betico" passed away in 1986, the mood is celebratory, for his enormous contribution to Aruban independence from the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles, or Status Aparte, in



Grupo di Betico provides fine family fare



which he is considered to have played a principal role.

The MC for the evening, Inga Dijkhoff, explained his importance to island visitors, urging residents to obtain the definitive biography for Papiamento readers written by his cousin, Gloria Croes, entitled, "Gilberto Francois "Betico" Croes - A Determined Leader."

Paseo Herencia GM Valerie Pieterz-Camacho and Marketing Manager Candy Rasmijn consider there is very little livelier to be found on

Aruba than entertainment by the family singing group founded by the great leader, now performing as "Grupo di Betico." He came from a large family with almost a dozen sisters and brothers, and they delighted their family and neighbors with their performances of traditional songs.

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Government is working..

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tor. In the final analysis, it is the citizen that should have easy access to the services they need. Each design of the MFA, made by local architects, has taken aspects of sustainability and energy consumption into account.

Minister Yrausquin has expressed satisfaction to learn that the Noord barrio is the one to be first to have the first MFA complex, and that those to be in charge with its management are persons of the barrio who know the needs of the barrio.

MFA's will replace what we know as the Auxiliary Government Offices in each district. The difference will be that these facilities will have more space for the services and benefits for the community. They will be open from in the morning until night and will provide space both inside and outside for social encounters and recreation.

The Minister of Finance has indicated that "the department, the service or company will have a physical presence to attend to their clients, or will allow access to personnel of MFA in their system to process the operation of collections, etc."

There may also be other services from the private sec-



Pointers to Ponder

Tony A.D. Green

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The 7 Little Things that Make a Big Difference

ORANJESTAD -- You've heard this statement many, many times...It's the little things that count, and it is true. We, all of us, have myriad opportunities every day to do the little things in our lives with enough power to make a big difference. It's easy, and it's fun. In the process, you'll gain goodwill, and self confidence.

Here they are, 7 little, powerful things that make a big difference in your life and in the lives of the people you rub shoulders with every day.

1. Say "Thank you."



Such a small thing, but the effect it has on everything around you is profound. Gratitude is a force so powerful that it transforms the giver, the receiver, and the world at large simultaneously. Heartfelt gratitude, humbly expressed, heals as it praises. Look the person serving you, whoever they may be, right in the eye and say "Thank you for doing this" and watch what happens. This is such a simple way to pay it forward, and it has such long lasting positive repercussions that you would be well served to make it a principle part of your daily practices. This one concept can change your life for the better forever, starting right now. Let's stop taking people and their service to us for granted, and begin expressing our thanks.

2. Yield the right of way.

Let someone into your lane in front of you on the highway, or the streets. Suggest that the person with a few items go before you with your full shopping cart. Step aside and let the tired mommy with the stroller and child through the door that you hold open with a smile. Wait patiently while the elderly man tells his stories to the waitress, even if it means your order will take a few minutes longer. Believe me when I tell you that doing all these things will give you a greater sense of

community, deeper compassion, and it will serve to significantly calm YOU down when you are feeling stressed and hurried. Kindness expands, and it fills the space with goodwill and cooperation.

3. Give sincere praise.

Everyone I know appreciates being appreciated, though how they prefer it to be expressed varies. But overall, and with very few exceptions, an honest compliment is always welcome. It can create instant rapport, and bridge many an awkward gap. You'd be amazed at what happens when you utter a simple compliment to someone with a worried look, or someone who appears angry. Your sincere praise or compliment can be just what the person needed to get them over their bridge of defeat or unhappiness.

4. Be a good Listener.

You were given two ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion. Listening makes you appear more charming, too, so there's a bonus. We are often so prone to speak, to say things, to offer advice, but very slow to just shut up and listen. Listening is an art that always makes a huge difference. Let's speak less and listen more. I have often said...a truly wise man is he who listens first, then listens again before he utters a word. Let's be wise people.

5. Send a personal note.

To make a big impression and touch someone's heart, send a short note to congratulate or compliment them for an accomplishment or a new appointment. The time and effort you spend will pay huge dividends in goodwill. Even if you have to use the internet or the BB to send it, go ahead, but send that personal note! Let the person know that you are rejoicing for and with them, it is an important act of goodwill!

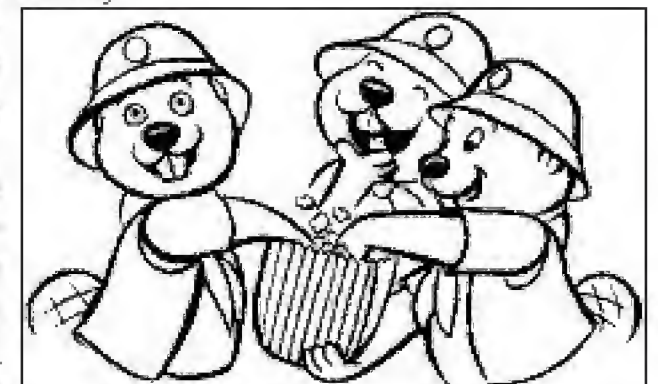
6. Use your manners.

Good manners are a social lubricant. They oil the machine of humanity. Using good manners conveys respect, both for self and for others. Bad man-

ners are to have a conversation with someone but you do all the talking! Civility in conversation allows everyone the opportunity to express themselves fully and to be heard. Meaningful discourse will be the natural result. Good manners are the foundation of polite society, and politeness can be both charming and disarming. Use good manners and social graces to woo your love, court a client, ease your way with authority. You'll go far with good manners.

7. Share.

Whether it's your cookies or your time, share. Every single person reading this has something, some talent, some time, some money, some compassion, and some fun that they could share with others. This is an abundant Universe, with plenty for everyone, if we'd only share. If you think you have nothing to share, then don't go where other people are! You can always share at least your smile. You'd be amazed at how many people out there are starving for just one smile from one somebody....so, share.



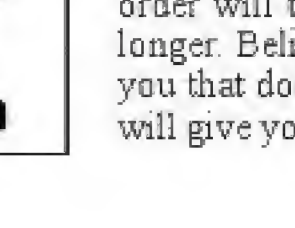
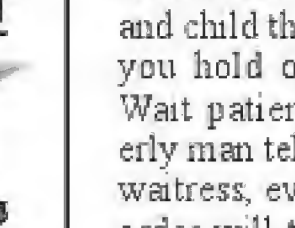
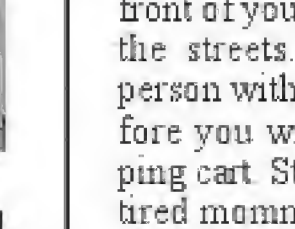
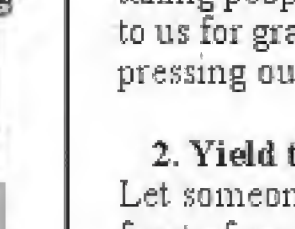
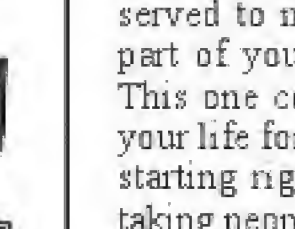
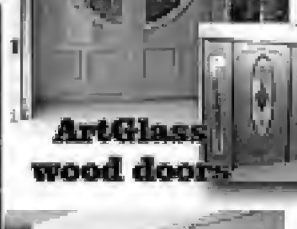
So there you have it...7 little things that make a big difference. We must practice them one by one. Together, they make a glorious way to go through life. But more than that, these 7 little tips are concrete, attainable and immediate ways to shift your energy, your point of view, and the way the world works. Practice them regularly, and be prepared for a dramatic increase in abundance, personal confidence, ease and grace. It's all good. Remember, what you give has a mysterious way of coming back to you in multiples! Finally, in all your doing, remember that God can and will help us to be or become the person we ought to be...draw on His strength!

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A festive ambiance ...

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The Bates of Virginia think Betico Day is just great

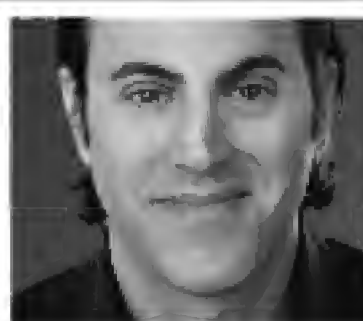
The audience at Paseo Herencia on Saturday evening was equally delighted with the energetic and melodic performance, with "Betico's" brothers, Tommy and Rudy, original members, leading the band. The evening was a tri-

bute to not only its founder, but the works of the island's major composer, Juan Chabaya "Padu" Lampe. "Padu Del Caribe," as he is popularly known through the region, was co-composer with Rufo Wever of our national anthem, "Aruba Dushi Terra," and is generally referred to as the island's "Father of Culture." His body of work includes many beloved waltzes, ballads and mazurkas.

The festive event and music energized the audience, with many jumping up to start dancing in the aisles. It was fine evening for the all family, with stirring entertainment for all ages.

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Aruba Postal Offices in Oranjestad

ORANJESTAD — The phenomenon that the postal sector at world level is changing fast is not new. The customer is getting more and more exigent that products and services are adjusted to his needs. The requirements of the consumer are increasing in accordance with the technological developments. These same necessities then again result in new technological developments. During the past 10 to 15 years this cycle has also become manifest in Aruba.

From these dynamics one notices that an important part of the postal activities contributed to a proper development in the commercial area. Consequence thereof is that the postal activities are directly related to technological and economic tendencies on the global market. Substitution of sending correspondence through electronic means, competition

on the local logistical market and the influence of the economic and financial crisis all greatly influenced how the postal world works. On international level the postal world has experienced a major impact in the last few years that affected the postal industry in general.

Technological innovations such as e-mail, text messages, voice/video via internet among others, for a large part substitute practices such as distribution of personal, commercial and marketing correspondence. The postal industry in general is being affected also by other factors such as consolidation of distribution, a combination of communication with other types of correspondence and a decrease of the frequency of sending mail, the way in which the mail is being sent and the weight of the mail. Commercial users for example can print

in smaller font, double-sided, use thinner paper and as such reduce the volume of sales for the industry.

Besides the technological and economic developments and the way in which the distribution is generally handled, one could notice also how the competition in certain postal areas has grown in the last 10 to 15 years. This factor reduced the possibility of being able to compensate for the areas of obligatory activities which suffer losses most of the time. One part of the postal services that does not form part of the competition but is submitted to global and local pressure is the operations in accordance with the international market regulations and, at the same time, meeting the social objectives of offering basic postal services to the whole population.

Continued on page 11

Egypt announces early election a day after carnage

CAIRO (AFP) - Egypt Sunday announced early presidential elections likely to anoint the general who overthrew Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, as the country reeled from a weekend of violence that killed dozens of people.

Interim president Adly Mansour announced the poll in a televised address, a day after 49 people died in clashes between Islamist protesters and police and thousands rallied in support of military chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Sisi was expected to declare his candidacy for the election, scheduled before mid-April, after a show of support including Saturday's large rally in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

But the weekend clashes and bombings also highlighted the interim government's pre-

carious grip seven months after Morsi's overthrow.

The violence came as Egypt commemorated the 2011 uprising that overthrew veteran strongman Hosni Mubarak, leading to three years of tumult that many hope Sisi's election will end. Over Friday and Saturday, six bombs exploded in Cairo and the canal city of Suez, killing six people and wounding dozens in an escalation of a militant campaign Mansour has pledged to eradicate.

Separately, 49 people were killed in clashes when police clamped down on protests by Morsi's Islamist supporters and anti-military activists, the health ministry said.

The protests were organised by Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood movement and its Islamist allies.

Three FARC rebels killed in Colombia

BOGOTA (AFP) - Colombia's military said yesterday three FARC guerrillas were killed in two separate operations, capping a week of combat that has left 29 rebels dead.

Among the latest FARC casualties was a rebel the army said was behind a bombing January 16 outside a police station in the town of Pradera that killed one person and injured 25 people.

Two other alleged FARC accomplices in the bombing were also captured in the military operation, in the southwest department of Valle del Cauca.

The FARC command repudiated the bombing at the time and vowed "appropriate disciplinary action."

Separately, the army said two other rebels were killed in

a military operation in the municipality of Montelibano, in the northwest Cordoba department. The deaths brought FARC's combat deaths to 29 since last weekend, according to the army.

The increased military activity prompted accusations by the FARC that President Juan Manuel Santos was escalating the conflict even as his government engages in peace talks in Havana.

The talks have been underway since November 2012, with the aim of ending Latin America's longest insurgency.

The parties are currently debating illegal drugs. Still to be resolved are compensation for victims of the conflict and the disarming of the rebel forces.



CHILE, Arica: Fishermen work at the port of Arica, Chile, close to the border with Peru and about 2100 km north of Santiago, on January 26, 2014. Both Peruvians and Chileans await with great expectations the final ruling of the International Court of The Hague on January 27, regarding Peru's claim over 38,000 square kilometers of Pacific Ocean that Chile controls, as well as a claim over a slice of international waters. (AFP PHOTO)

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Thousands stage 'Day of Anger' protest against French president

PARIS (AFP) - Several thousand people marched through Paris yesterday in a "Day of Anger" against embattled President Francois Hollande which ended in clashes between police and protesters.

Security forces used tear gas to disperse several hundred youths who lobbed police with bottles, fireworks, iron bars and dustbins. Police said at least 150 people had been arrested after the clashes, during which 12 officers were injured.

Interior Minister Manuel Valls condemned the violence "by individuals, varied groups from the extreme and ultra-right, whose only goal is to create unrest".

The march organised by a motley group of some 50 small and mainly right-wing organisations, however failed to attract bigger anti-Hollande

movements.

Organisers claimed a turnout of some 120,000 people, however police estimated there were 17,000 people at the protest, held under pouring rain.

The demonstrators railed against a slew of policies under Hollande -- the most unpopular French president of modern times -- such as last year's law allowing gay marriage.

Some called for France's withdrawal from the European Union, while others urged the respect of freedom of speech, a reference to the government's recent decision to ban a show by controversial comic Dieudonne, whose sketches have been deemed anti-Semitic.

A Jewish students union the UEJF condemned "anti-Semitic slogans and Nazi salutes" by some protesters.

"This 'Day of Anger' has turned into a day of hate," said its president Sacha Reingewirtz.

Many in the crowd complained about Hollande's tangled love life a day after the president announced his split with his partner Valerie Trierweiler following an affair with a younger actress.

"You are here to say you are fed up," an organiser told the crowd, adding that France's leaders "are more preoccupied with their affairs... than unemployment."

France, the eurozone's second largest economy, is battling huge levels of unemployment. Hollande recently announced plans for 50 billion euros (\$68 billion) in spending cuts between 2015 and 2017 to revive the economy.

Snowden: US officials 'want to kill me'

BERLIN (AFP) - Fugitive intelligence leaker Edward Snowden voiced fears that US "government officials want to kill me", in a TV interview in Germany yesterday.

The comment comes just days after Snowden's Russian lawyer Anatoly Kucherena said the American feared for his life, following a report by US website BuzzFeed of explicit threats against him from unnamed Pentagon and National Security Agency (NSA) officials.

Snowden also told the German broadcaster: "These people, and they are government officials, have said they would love to put a bullet in my head or poison me when I come out of the supermarket, and then watch as I die in the shower."

The translated Snowden quotes were released by German public television chain ARD, as part of a longer interview shot secretly in Moscow.

In a BuzzFeed article posted online last week and en-

titled "American Spies Want Edward Snowden Dead", a Pentagon official is quoted as saying: "I would love to put a bullet in his head."

"In a world where I would not be restricted from killing an American, I personally would go and kill him myself," a current NSA analyst was further quoted as saying.

One unnamed army officer told BuzzFeed that Snowden could be "poked" on his way home from buying groceries by a passerby who is actually a US agent. Snowden "thinks nothing of it at the time (and soon) starts to feel a little woozy," the US intelligence officer is quoted as saying. "And the next thing you know he dies in the shower."

Snowden, a former NSA contractor, is wanted by US authorities on treason charges for disclosing details of a vast intelligence operation that monitored millions of phone calls and emails across the world.



MUCHELNEY (AFP) - A car is seen submerged on the side of a flooded road leading into the cut-off village of Muchelney in Somerset, southwest England, on January 26, 2014. A local council declared a major incident on the flood-hit Somerset Levels where some villages like Muchelney have been cut off for weeks by flooding that has submerged roads and thousands of acres of farmland in the area of southwestern England.



BAHRAIN, Diraz : Bahraini protesters clash with riot police following the funeral of 20-year-old prisoner Fadel Abbas Musalem in the village of Diraz, west of the capital Manama, on January 26, 2014. The Gulf kingdom's main Shiite political opposition group said Musalem died the previous day as a result of torture during his detention. **AFP PHOTO**



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The Ukraine rebellion spreads as opposition snubs compromise deal

KIEV (AFP) - The Ukrainian opposition said yesterday a compromise deal offered by President Viktor Yanukovich was not enough to end the country's worst crisis since independence as nationwide protests spread to the president's eastern heartland.

With the Ukraine shaken by a week of violence between police and protesters, all three main Ukrainian opposition leaders personally attended the Kiev funeral of one of three activists confirmed to have been shot dead in the unrest.

The protests began over two months ago over Yanukovich's rejection of a pact with the European Union under Russian pressure but have now turned into an all-out bid to oust him from power.

Tensions remained high in Kiev after protesters seized control of a building used by special police forces in central

Kiev overnight, as masked radicals armed with baseball clubs roamed the streets.

Europe has urged dialogue between the two sides -- a call echoed by Pope Francis who voiced hope in his weekly Angelus prayer on St Peter's Square that "the search for common good may prevail in the hearts of all".

Under unprecedented pressure, Yanukovich late Saturday offered the opposition posts in government including that of prime minister but his opponents said that the offer fell short of what they needed.

Yanukovich offered to share leadership with Fatherland party leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk as prime minister and UDAR (Punch) chief and world boxing champion Vitali Klitschko as deputy prime minister.

Opposition leaders have been careful, however, neither

accepting nor explicitly rejecting Yanukovich's proposals. They have said talks will continue although it is not clear exactly when.

Yanukovich's office has also said the president is willing to consider constitutional changes to reduce his power and return to a system according more authority to the prime minister.

A crucial day in the standoff is expected to be Tuesday when parliament will meet in extraordinary session to debate key sticking points in the crisis, including possible changes to key protest laws.

Thousands of activists meanwhile laid siege to local government offices in four Ukrainian cities.

Protesters have already occupied regional administrations in 10 Ukrainian regions to protest against Yanukovich-appointed governors.

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US nuns can opt out of contraception clause: high court



WASHINGTON (AFP) - The US Supreme Court said Friday that religiously-affiliated groups could opt out of a provision in the new health care law that requires employers to provide insurance that includes contraception.

But the high court, whose temporary order only applies while litigation continues, also ordered the groups to first notify the Department of Health and Human Services in writing of their objections to the so-called contraception mandate.

The groups that filed the petition were the Baltimore-based Little Sisters of the Poor order of nuns that runs nursing homes across the United States, and the Christian Brothers Services of Romeoville, Illinois, which provides health care benefit services for the Catholic community.

Both had cited their Roman Catholic religious convictions

in opposition to the contraception requirement, one of the most controversial aspects of President Barack Obama's health law.

The Obama administration has said that women who work for nonprofit religious groups that are against birth control could receive separate coverage not paid for by their employers.

The law exempts churches and other religious organizations from having to provide coverage for birth control.

But the administration refused to offer such assurances to secular businesses whose owners have religious objections to contraception. The landmark Affordable Care Act (ACA) was a bid by Obama to guarantee that uninsured Americans are afforded access to medical care, but opponents have objected strongly to various aspects of it.

No health shield from vitamin D pills: study

PARIS (AFP) - Vitamin D supplements have no significant effect on preventing heart attack, stroke, cancer or bone fractures, according to a review of scientific evidence published recently.

Researchers led by Mark Bolland of the University of Auckland in New Zealand looked at 40 high-quality trials to see if supplements met a benchmark of reducing risk of these problems by 15 percent or more.

Previous research had seen a strong link between vitamin D deficiency and poor health in these areas.

But the new study, published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology, strengthens



arguments that vitamin D deficiency is usually the result of ill health -- not the cause of it.

Vitamin D is a key component for healthy bones, teeth and muscles.

It is produced naturally when the skin is exposed to sunlight or derived from foods such as oily fish, egg yolks and cheese.

In March last year, British scientists, in a comparison of 4,000 women, found that vitamin D supplements taken in pregnancy made no difference to the child's bone health.

In contrast, a November 2012 investigation into pregnant women who lived in high-latitude, northern hemisphere countries with long, dark winters found a link between low levels of natural vitamin D and an increased risk of multiple sclerosis (MS) in their offspring.

For these women, taking vitamin D supplements to offset the effects of long periods without sunlight could be advisable, according to that research.

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Gold Coast Aruba: This is the time to invest

--Management of Gold Coast Aruba, the island's newest and most innovative gated community, reports that sales have been very good and encouraging as the global economy recovers and people looking to purchase vacation homes have found that Gold Coast is an outstanding investment value. Director of Sales, Fito Croes has noticed a surprising percentage of owners in reality do not spend a great amount of time personally to use the villas or town homes they purchase, but are taking advantage of Gold Coast's rental services to turn their investment into ready income.

"The greater portion of home owners are using their 'home away from home' in Aruba to escape the winter months, or spend holidays with the family on the island," he remarked, "but I am gratified by how many are buying because they felt secure with real estate investment on Aruba. They really study the history and economy of the island and are impressed with the political stability and continually increasing value of prime locations. Gold Coast is in the heart of Malmok, considered Aruba's most exclusive community where the value of properties has only increased over time. It is only minutes to the best beaches and all the action, and yet offers a quiet and secluded getaway, we are very pleased by the response to our concept."



Fito, with his sister Mayrin and brother Rudy operate Cas Bon, which has been constructing homes and building developments for all budgets for nearly twenty years. "Gold Coast Aruba is the jewel in our crown," observes Fito. "We were very excited about this project and the scope of actual and planned facilities and amenities. We have spoken to countless island visitors to find out what they would really want in a permanent residence on Aruba, and took from there."

Input from frequent vacationers who have dreamed of their own home in Aruba contributed to the realization of Gold Coast Aruba which when complete will be a community

of 260 town homes, villas and condominiums with a stunning clubhouse complemented by two additional community pool areas. The Clubhouse is about to start construction and will offer to the community homeowners and visitors 2 tennis courts, full service spa and fitness center as well as a stunning pool area and is expected to be complete by early 2013. It will also house a restaurant and mini-market.

Owners who purchased upon the groundbreaking only a few short years ago, are already enjoying a nearly 50% appreciation on their investment, particularly those taking advantage of the on site management's rental services pro-

gram. There is always a great demand for Aruba and facilities such as those at Gold Coast, make it easy for some owners to see a valuable return on their investment.

The design of the residences and public areas is open, airy and spacious, taking full advantage of the island environment, with quality construction and finishing available. Partnering with two of Aruba's top providers of kitchens and bathrooms enables developers to offer custom options allowing buyers to individualize their homes. An elegant and chic furniture package is available or island designers will assist owners in finishing the décor to their specific tastes.

There are many aspects to purchasing property, not the least is the future value of the investment. To further enhance this, Gold Coast management have inaugurated a number of in-house services and have recently become affiliated Interval International, the world's largest network of vacation ownership properties which provides an unlimited international pool of investors to tap for ownership and rental prospects. Property exchange for a vacation in another destination is also available through the Interval International affiliation. Gold Coast's own rental services have also proven highly successful in assisting owners in renting their villas; 24-hour security and maintenance services also tip the scales when it is time to make a decision. Aside from all this, housekeeping, child care, catering services, car rental through its partnership with AVIS car rental are also available as well as pre-shopping services so cupboards and refrigerators are stocked upon arrival, which can also be arranged through their property management department. Personnel are also available to assist in arranging restaurant reservations and island activities.

Visit their website: www.goldcoastaruba.com

for more details and availability or call 586-2200 to arrange a personal tour.

Phil Collins working with British songstress Adele



LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Veteran British rocker Phil Collins said in comments aired Friday that he has started collaborating with compatriot Adele, reported to be working on a follow-up to her hit 2011 album "21."

The former "Genesis" frontman, who effectively retired from music a few years ago, gave no more details of his cooperation with the multiple Grammy-winning British songstress.

"I've just started to work with Adele," he told a TV interviewer for Inside South Florida, adding, "She contacted me to write together."

Collins, 62, said he had not known much about 25-year-old London-born Adele, who had huge hits with songs including "Someone Like You" and "Rolling in the Deep."

"I wasn't actually too aware. I live in a cave," he joked. "But she's achieved an incredible amount. I really love her voice. I love some of that stuff she's done, too," he added.

Adele had a baby following the worldwide success of her second album, "21," released in February 2011. She won another Grammy last year for the 007 theme tune "Skyfall," and is working on a new album, according to Rolling Stone.

Some media reports have suggested it could be released in mid 2014.

Last month, "21" became the first album to pass three million digital sales in the United States, according to leading online tracking company Nielsen. It continues to enjoy robust sales and so far has sold 26 million copies worldwide.

Collins, the drummer-turned-frontman of Genesis who went on to sell more than 100 million albums as a solo artist, announced in March 2011 that he was calling it a day to concentrate on being a full-time father to two young sons.

His comments came two days before the 56th annual Grammy Awards show this weekend in Los Angeles.

Canadian bad boy Justin Bieber risks US deportation

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Justin Bieber's run-ins with the law could potentially get him kicked out of the United States, the nation where the Canadian-born teen idol struck it rich, immigration lawyers said recently.

Bieber, 19, kept a low profile a day after he was charged with driving under the influence after police caught him drag racing in Miami Beach, Florida, allegedly after drinking and smoking marijuana.

On Twitter, the voice behind hits "Baby" and "Boyfriend" kept an uncharacteristic silence, leaving his 49 million followers to rally behind him with the trending hashtag #WeWillAlwaysSupportYouJustin.

Besides the DUI charge, Bieber -- released on a \$2,500 bond -- also faces charges of resisting arrest and driving with an expired Georgia state license behind the wheel of a yellow Lamborghini sports car.

He was already under investigation for allegedly hurling eggs at a neighbor's house in Los Angeles -- an incident

that led police to search his mansion, where they seized illicit drugs and arrested one of his associates.

By late afternoon (2100 GMT) Friday, nearly 8,000 people had signed an online petition on the official White House website calling for Bieber's deportation.

"He is not only threatening the safety of our people, but he is also a terrible influence on our nation's youth," said the petition, which needs 100,000 signatures by February 22 to elicit a White House response.

Like many non-American entertainers, Bieber -- lives and works in United States under a so-called O-1 visa, according to the Hollywood Reporter, a showbiz trade journal.

"To qualify for an O-1 visa, the beneficiary must demonstrate extraordinary ability by sustained national or international acclaim and must be coming temporarily to the United States to continue work in the area of extraordinary ability," says the US Citizenship and Immigration Services on its website.

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Biofuel from desert plants grown with seawater

PARIS (AFP) - Aerospace giant Boeing and its research partners in the Middle East said Wednesday they would start field trials after recording progress in making bio-fuel from desert plants fed with seawater.

The Sustainable Bioenergy Research Consortium, affiliated with the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi, will plant two hectares (five hectares) of the saltwater-tolerant plants called halophytes in the region's sandy soil and the plants will be fed with waste water from a fish and shrimp farm.

"Plants called halophytes show even more promise than we expected as a source of renewable fuel for jets and other vehicles," said the Consortium's director Alejandro Rios.

The plants have seeds which are high in oil content, but the project has found the shrub-like plants to be more effective than other crops in producing fuel due to their cell structure.

That is due to their very low level of lignin, which binds plant cells together, meaning it takes less energy to process the entire plant into fuel.

Funded by Boeing, Etihad Airways and the petroleum refining company Honeywell UOP, the project aims to develop a sustainable aviation biofuel that emits 50 to 80 percent less carbon over its life cycle than fossil fuels.

Criticism of early biofuels is that they are made from food crops, or competed for land and water with food crops, driving up food prices.

The pilot project, expected to begin later in 2014 and last three years, will test whether it can efficiently produce bio-fuel while growing the non-edible crop on arid land unsuitable for food crop cultivation using waste seawater.

US kids read little on e-readers, tablets: study

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Two-thirds of young children in the United States now have access to an e-reader or tablet, but only half of them actually use the device to read, a research institute said in a study published Friday.

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center surveyed 1,577 parents on how much time their two- to 10-year-old kids spent with educational content on "screen media" such as televisions, computers and video games.

Sixty-two percent of chil-



dren had access to either an e-reader, a tablet or both -- but

only 49 percent of them used the devices for reading, either

alone or with their parents, the study found.

And when they did read, it was typically for about five minutes a day -- compared with about half an hour with printed books.

Parents considered 44 percent of the screen media used by their children to be educational -- representing 56 minutes out of two hours and seven minutes' viewing a day.

Fifty-seven percent thought their child had learned "a lot" from educational media about

reading and mathematics -- but only 19 percent thought that much had been learned about science.

Named for one of the founders of the Children's Television Workshop, the studio behind "Sesame Street," the Joan Ganz Cooney Center promotes literacy skills while researching digital learning for youngsters.

It posted its study on its website: www.joanganzcooneycenter.org

APEC: Asia Pacific wine trade loses \$1 bn a year to red tape

SINGAPORE (AFP) - Red tape is costing the Asia Pacific's wine industry \$1.0 billion a year, APEC said on the weekend, as it vowed to simplify the procedures to take advantage of growing demand in the region.

A complex web of non-tariff barriers such as multiple export certificates and unnecessary testing is hampering the industry's growth, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping said in a statement.

Tom LaFaille, vice president and international trade counsel of the US-based Wine Institute, said the value of wine trade in the APEC region more than tripled to \$23 billion in 2012 from \$7.0 billion in 2000.

Asian markets are a key growth area for global producers, with China in particular tipped to become the largest wine-consuming nation within 20 years, overtaking the United States, as the world's number two economy fuels a wealthier middle class.

LaFaille said however that while the wine trade in the region has grown, "so too have unnecessary trade barriers".

Currently, individual economies require different sets of documents from wine exporters to ensure that the product is safe for consumption, making the certification process "confusing, not to mention costly and duplicative", the statement said.

It added that the APEC Wine Regulatory Forum, which is tasked with eliminating some of the barriers, has been working with national regulators to simplify the process.

The group aims to remove export certificates where unnecessary, develop a model wine certificate applicable across the board and promote electronic submissions of documents.

"These non-tariff barriers are estimated to cost businesses, primarily small and medium-sized wine producers, approximately \$1.0 billion a

year," said Wade Armstrong, head of the New Zealand delegation to the World Wine Trade Group. According to the World Bank, consolidating the certification process will cut preparation for the documents from nine days to three and slash costs from \$156 to \$52 for each certificate. There has been some progress, the statement said, noting that the United States and China have agreed on a "consolidated wine export certificate" while Chile has initiated a pilot scheme to submit the documents electronically.

APEC groups 21 Pacific Rim economies, including big wine exporters like Australia, Chile, New Zealand and the United States. The other members are Brunei, Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

APEC accounts for more than 50 percent of global gross domestic product and more than 40 percent of world trade.



CARACAS: AFP photo shows customers at the Lufthansa airline offices in Caracas on January 24, 2014. Several airlines temporarily suspended their ticket sales in Venezuela a day after the government almost doubled the exchange rate of the dollar for air fares, 11.30 bolivars per dollar, which effectively devaluated the bolivar but only in the tourism sector. Ecuadorian airline Tame was first to suspend its flights to Caracas on Wednesday, after Venezuela's central bank defaulted on payments. Local media said Panama's Copa Airlines, Portugal's TAP, Air France, Air Europa, Avianca and Aerolineas Argentinas are also refusing payments in bolivars.



UNITED KINGDOM, Sunderland: A worker adds the final touches to the new Nissan Qashqai at the Sunderland Nissan plant in northeast England on January 22, 2014. Qashqai was unveiled in November 2013 and the factory has now reached full production with a completed car leaving the production line every 61 seconds. (AFP)

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A dynamic Postal World

Continued from page 5

One cannot discard the fact that the economic and financial crisis that rocked the world in 2008 has a large impact on businesses and this also reflects, consequently, on the postal industry. In times of crisis the mail volumes experienced significant decreases. The crisis translates in a drop of the quantity of distribution of postal businesses. Due to the nature of the intensive work in the postal sector this will cause preoccupations as regards the level of employment, the level of wages and fringe benefits.

To illustrate the foregoing we followed the developments in both the Netherlands and the United States.

The Netherlands:

- Drop in mail volume of 12% in the first 3 quarters of 2013;
- Financial loss of 403 million Euro up to August of 2013;
- Two price increases of stamps of 11% and 6,7% in 6 months in 2013;
- Mail delivery on 5 days instead of 6;
- Elimination of post offices;
- Dutch Post sold 50% of its shares in TNT after the failed sale to UPS.

United States:

- Financial loss of US\$ 15.9 billion in 2012;
- Mail delivery on 5 days instead of 6;
- Proposition in Congress to eliminate house-to-house delivery and instead deliver to community mail-boxes;
- Two price increases of stamps in 2013 of 6,5%;
- Mail volume decreased with 30% from 213 billion in 2006 to 160 billion in 2012;
- Another expected decrease of 144 billion or 23% in 2016.

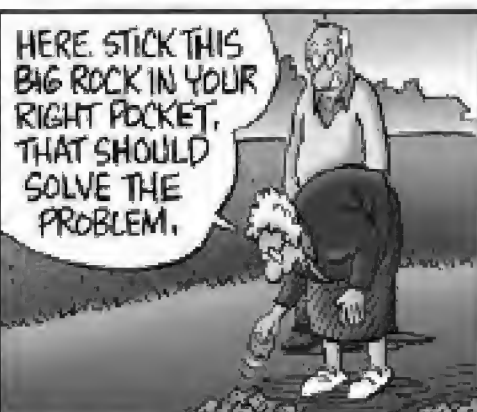
The majority of postal services in the world are suffering a loss of volume of sales at a rhythm of more than 5% per year, forcing them to adjust to the new circumstances. For the majority part of postal administrations around the world it is a fact that their main activity and, consequently, their biggest source of income, is the massive load of correspondence of large companies that serve the community, such as for example the massive correspondence of banks, insurance companies, utility services, the government, etc. In several cases this percentage amounts to 80% of the total traffic.

The postal industry is one of the largest employers in the world. If one takes into account that globally there are more than 5 million postal employees, this automatically becomes a preoccupation for governments as well. For a postal administration to survive in the current precarious global situation it has to be innovative and at the same time improve its efficiency, quality and level of service. This will have financial and socio-economic consequences for every country. In recent years many countries have further developed and transformed their postal enterprises into logistical enterprises and this seems to be the direction that postal services should take.

SATURDAY'S Crossword Answer

P	A	L	E	R		A	P	T
E	L	E	V	A	T	E	M	A
S	O	M	E	H	O	W	I	G
T	H	O		Y	E	L	L	A
S	A	N	K		P	R	E	E
				R	O	O	S	T
C	A	L	I	C	O		S	P
A	B	A	S	E	D		A	M
I	N	D		A	L	T	E	R
R	E	L		N	E	A	R	I
O	R	E			J	E	S	S

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ACROSS

- 1 Swelter
6 Oil cartel acronym
10 Singer Reeves
12 Type of dancer (hyph.)
13 Film's Meryl
14 ___-mutton (hyph.)
15 Kitty talk
16 Before (prefix)
18 ___ culpa
19 Author Levin
20 "___ Boys" (Alcott)
23 Sticky substance
24 Tree juice
25 GI's address (abbr.)
26 Hirt and Capone
27 Fleur-de-
28 Wine (Fr.)
29 NBA's Unseld
30 Writing implement

31 FDR's dog

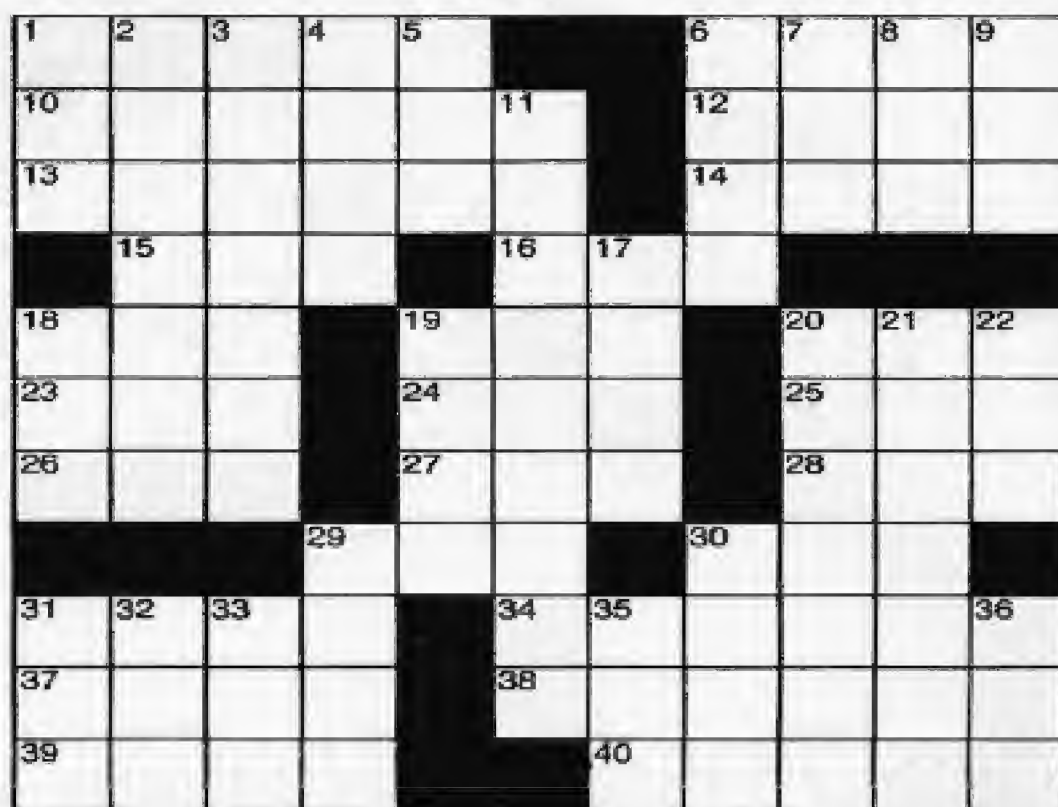
- 34 Place for liner
37 Wearing clothes
38 Restrict consumption
39 Hamster's home
40 Biblical food

DOWN

- 1 Rental ad abbr.
2 Hot breakfast food
3 Overdue

debts

- 4 Cook slowly
5 "In ___ beginning..."
6 Gawk
7 Edgar Allan ___
8 Quiche ingredient
9 Bill's partner
11 Rater
17 Criticizes
18 NYC transit org.
19 Maui, e.g.
20 Olympic spear
21 Viewpoint
22 Jr., to Sr.
29 Boggs of baseball
30 Animal rights gp.
31 Overseer of the airwaves (abbr.)
32 ___ mode (2 wds.)
33 Linger (behind)
35 Orange tuber
36 Heredity initials



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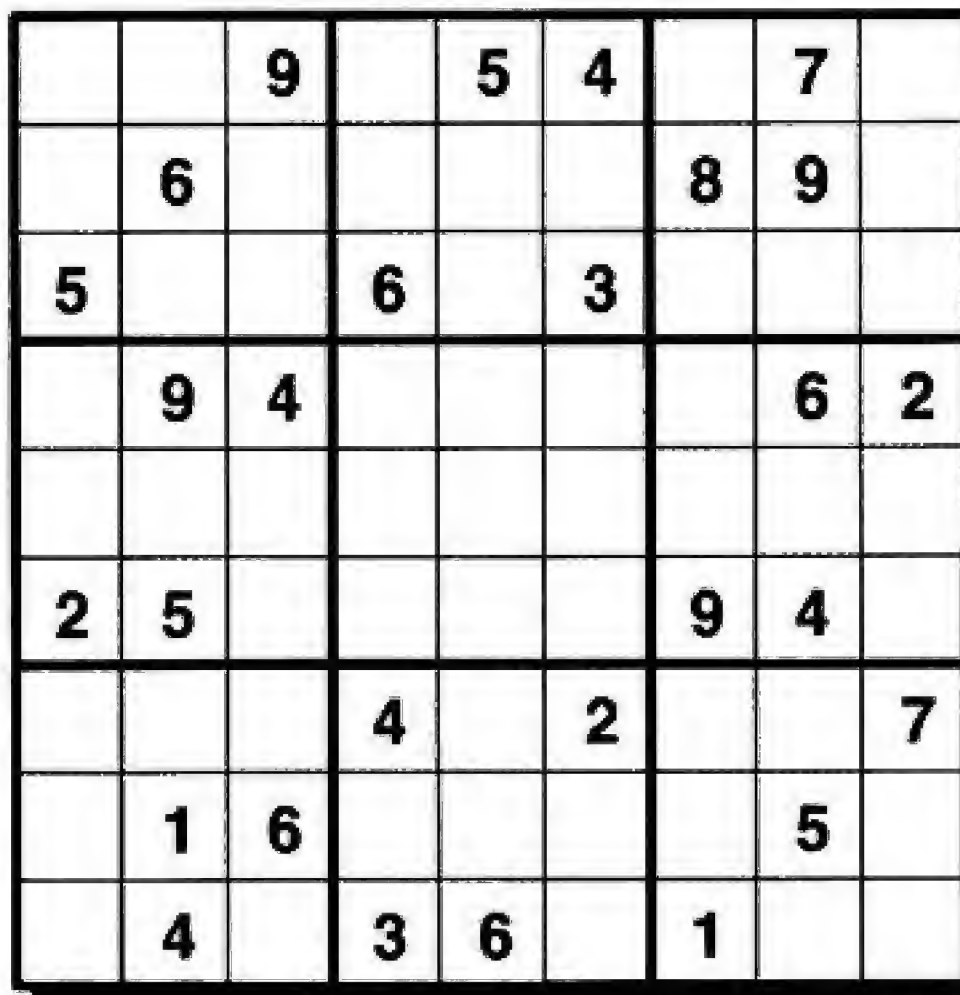
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Sudoku



SOLUTION

6	8	1	5	9	2	7	4	3
7	5	2	8	4	6	9	1	3
4	2	9	2	1	7	5	8	6
2	7	6	9	8	4	1	5	3
8	1	5	6	7	2	4	3	9
3	9	4	1	2	5	7	6	8
1	3	7	8	6	9	8	4	5
5	6	8	4	2	1	6	9	7
9	4	3	7	5	8	6	2	1

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

Discover authentic Aruban cuisine at *The Queen's*



Mama Luisa hard at work in the kitchen

Enjoy a true taste of Aruba without having to travel in the charming surroundings of The Queen's Restaurant in the Palm Beach Plaza Mall. Your host, Varella Innocencia has brought her very popular Oranjestad eatery to Palm Beach, showcasing authentic local cuisine only a short walk away from the major resorts.

The "hipper" and elegant new digs offer beautiful views, but Mama Luisa's magical touch in the kitchen is what

first won this charming eatery their loyal clientele. She can be counted on to be conjuring up the delicious dishes that have been in her family for generations. As Varella says, "My mom loves and lives to cook. Even when she is not at work in the restaurant, she is experimenting with new dishes all day at home."

She is the Queen of the Kitchen."

Be sure to try Luisa's acclaimed "Carni Stoba di Ma-

machi" - "Grandma's Beef Stew," or their fresh, whole snapper, with Mama Luisa's delectable salsa criollo. Don't miss the specialty of the house, a favorite local delicacy, Keshi Yena - "Filled Cheese." This is a tasty, filling stew of chicken, with other ingredients that are handy that day, all incased in a thick skin of melted Gouda. It is satisfying and particularly memorable. Regional side dishes and some of Mama's secret recipe prepara-

tion of banana hasa and creamy potatoes provide a deliciously picturesque meal.

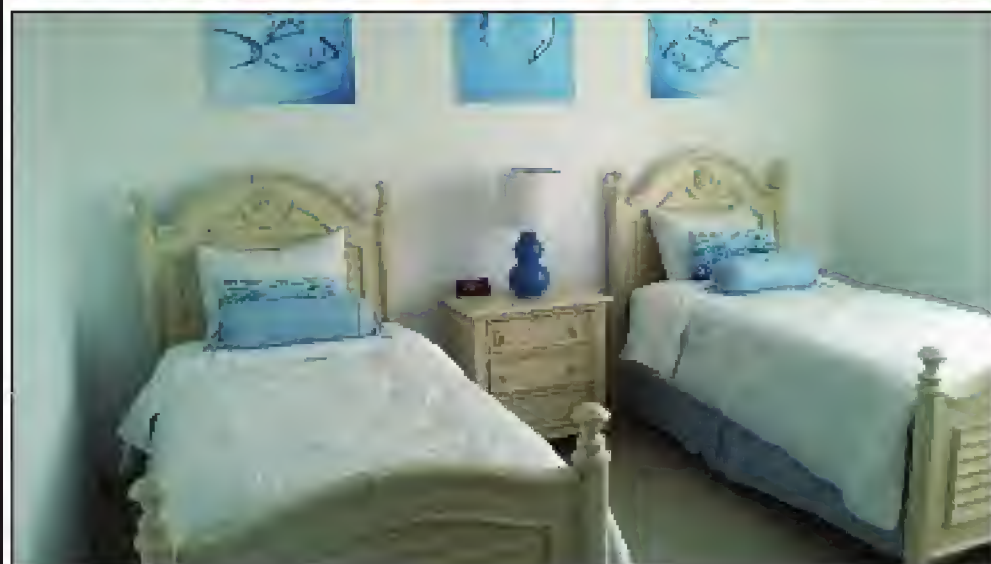
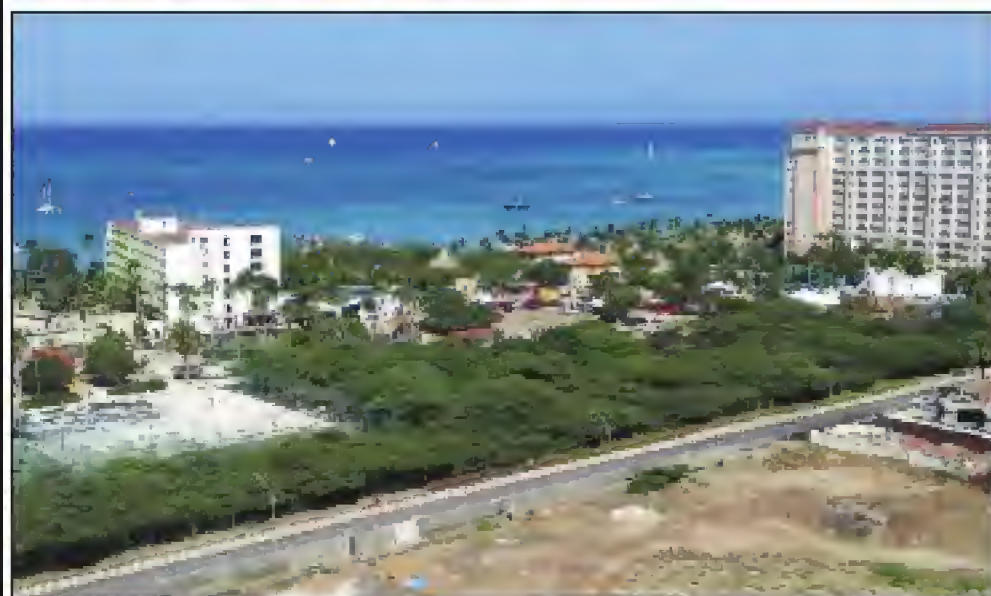
The Queen's is located on the second level of Palm Beach Plaza, tucked into a cozy corner at the front of the mall. If you have a mind to try the real deal in Aruban food, without a doubt, this is the way to go, reasonably priced and easily accessible. A full menu can be seen on their website, <http://www.thequeensaruba.com/>.

[queensaruba.com/](http://www.thequeensaruba.com/)

Aside from an extensive regular menu they also have daily specials made from whatever is in season, and Mama Luisa is in the mood to prepare, so don't be shy about asking for something that may not be on the menu, as they are always eager to please.

The Queen's is open daily from 3:00 pm - 11:00 pm, offering both indoor and outdoor dining.

Acqua Condominium Aruba announces that construction has been progressing at a brisk pace



The East Tower, overlooking Palm Beach boasts 208 condos, spread over 14 floors. The two top building floors embrace 16 penthouse apartments with majestic views. The building is simply awaiting the windows and a few finishing touches, to conclude construc-

tion, very possibly by the end of this year. Following the completion of the elegant clubhouse, the tropical landscaped pool and the spacious parking lots, the condos will be delivered to their proud new owners. Ground has been cleared for the North Tower, which

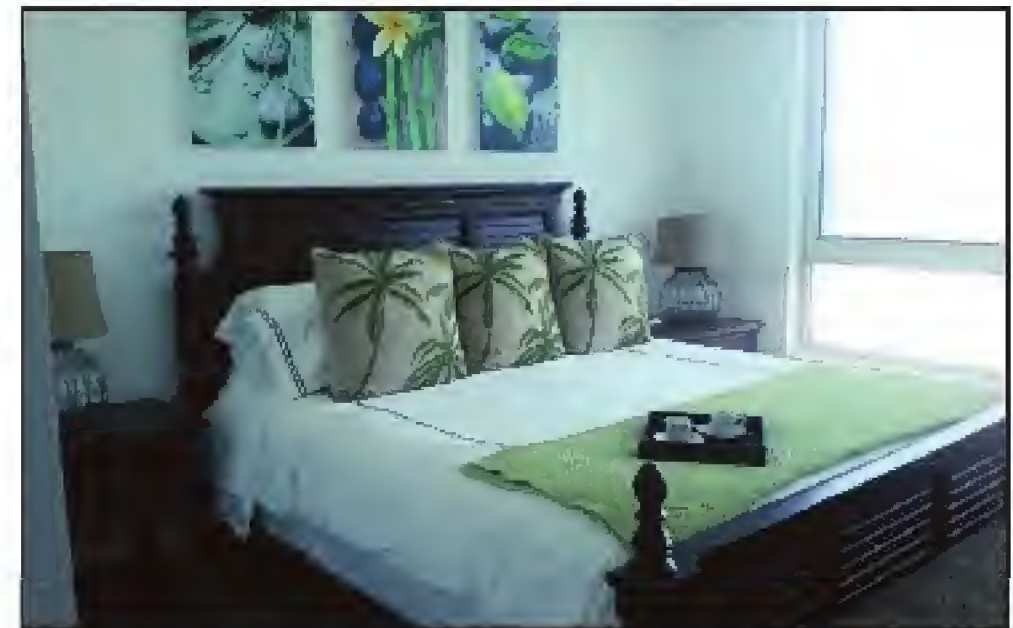
will follow as soon as the East Tower is completed.

A spokesperson for Acqua Condo Aruba reports that the project is receiving tremendous attention, particularly for the winter months. Snow-birds longing to reside in a vacation home on Aruba are now able to visualize this dream coming true, in a manner that leaves them utterly care free when not in residence.

Making the decision to purchase and acting on it quickly, was recently made even more imperative. In November of 2010, the island government of Aruba reiterated its commitment to a building moratorium for the next 10 years, making Acqua Condominium a truly unique investment opportunity, as it is the one and only high-rise condo project, on property land, in the island's most-desired location.

In view of the moratorium news, and the project's lucrative position, developers were compelled to discontinue the pre-construction discounts. Nevertheless, other purchase incentives have introduced. Special discount offers in effect at present are:

Pay 30% down payment and



get 10% discount, 50% down payment, get 15% discount, pay in full for a 25% discount. Prices start at \$ 296,800 for a 2-bedroom/2 bathroom apartment. Paying cash will allow the buyer to obtain this very same unit for only \$ 222,600 - remarkable savings!

Other incentives: The opportunity to profit from your purchase is also available to buyers when they place their unit in a rental pool year.

If the image of Aqua Condominium tugs at your heartstrings, you are invited to visit the sales gallery and the two elegant model-suites available for viewing, fully finished with luxurious touches and high-end amenities.

The sales center is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. nonstop, and Saturday and Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. You are invited to meet the sales team who will guide you through the purchase of the stylish condo of your dreams, allowing you to return to Aruba as often as you wish.

You will find the website very helpful.

Take a virtual tour and garner info regarding all legal documents, floor plans, furnishings and finishing at: www.acquaruba.com

Acqua Condominium Aruba, J.E. Irausquin Boulevard z/n. Palm Beach Aruba.

What were they thinking? Skaters fashion own style



leading skating body the ISU to change the rules requiring female skaters to wear more modest costumes, including skirts.

Sochi should live up to expectations.

Olympic men's gold medal hopeful Javier Fernandez of Spain's stripy black, white, red and yellow costume to "Satan Takes A Holiday" this season has mystified spectators.

"It was (coach) Brian (Orser)'s idea to use Spanish-typical colours. It's a bit 'a mix of ideas from various people ... put together in a unique costume!' he explained.

Costumes for skating's biggest stars such as South Korea's Kim Yu-Na and Mao Asada of Japan run into the thousands of dollars but for more modest skaters such as Romania's Zoltan Kelemen it can prove costly at over 2,000 dollars.

"My costumes are made by a Russian company. You send them the music and they give you a couple of examples. There's nothing random about it," said Kelemen of his floral shirt.

"For me it just matters how I feel in it, that it's comfortable and light.

"For my budget it's expensive so I can use the same one for two seasons."

Former Olympic medalist Barbara Fusar-Poli, now a coach, is fussy with what her charges wear in a sport where choreography and interpreta-

tion count in the scores.

"We put all our ideas together. It's a long drawn out process. With Barbara that can take quite a while as she's never satisfied," explained Italian ice dancer Marco Fabri, who works with Fusar-Poli.

"For Romeo and Juliet this season we did a lot of research before putting our ideas down, and then it all changed a few times."

French skater Florent Amodio, a former European champion, skating a "Tango" in burgundy and black with a sequenced plunging neckline, personally designs his costumes.

"It's one of the most important parts of the performance -- costumes and music. The whole lot goes together," said Amodio, who was born in Brazil but adopted by a French couple when he was a baby.

"I have my personal style, but I respect the style of other skaters. I chose the Tango at the beginning of the season and I think this costume works well with my skin colour. I want to try something new at the Olympics."

Pinturault slaloms to super-combined win



KITZBUEHEL (AFP) - French tyro Alexis Pinturault used all his slalom expertise to comprehensively win Sunday's World Cup super-combined to mark himself out as a medal favourite for the Sochi Olympics.

The 22-year-old clocked a total of 2min 02.79sec over a super-G and a slalom, standing 13th fastest after the first event but going on to set a lead time of 51.72sec in the technical event to finish ahead of reigning world champion in the discipline, American Ted Ligety.

It was Pinturault's sixth win on the World Cup circuit, following swiftly on the heels of his slalom victory in Wengen last weekend, and puts the medal spotlight firmly on the French racer ahead of next month's Winter Olympics.



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US driver backs controversial bobsleigh selection



Lolo Jones

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Top US women's bobsleigh driver Elana Meyers has voiced support for her Sochi Olympic team-mates amid criticism of the selection of ex-hurdler and bobsleigh arriviste Lolo Jones.

In a Facebook posting on Friday, Meyers didn't mention anyone by name, but said the US bobsleigh officials properly based their decisions on performance measurements.

"The three athletes that were chosen for the Olympic team were chosen because of the numbers they have put up this season," she said.

"In a sport where medals are won and lost by hundredths of a second, it is very important to analyze all the numbers and make the best decision to try to win Olympic medals for our country.

"Everyone may not agree with the decision, but the fact of the matter is, the numbers supported the selection committee's decision and three

athletes were chosen."

Jones, and sprinter Lauryn Williams -- who won a 4x100m relay Olympic gold in London in 2012 -- were named last Sunday as pushers, along with Aja Evans, for the Sochi Games.

Jones, a two-time world indoor hurdles champion who finished fourth in London and seventh in Beijing in 2008 after clipping the final hurdle while leading the field, and Williams had never tried bobsleigh until they were recruited after the London Games.

Two of the candidates who didn't make it, Katie Eberling and Emily Azevedo, questioned the selection policy.

Azevedo told USA Today this week that the selection of Jones was due more to her high profile as an athlete than to her pushing prowess.

She told the Chicago Tribune that decisions during the season and selection process "had flaws and inconsistencies."

PARIS (AFP) - Forget the quadruple jump or the triple axel what will really count in the Olympic rink at Sochi's Iceberg Sports Palace from February 6-20 will be what the skater is wearing.

Olympic skating fashions are the most talked about at the Winter Games.

American Johnny Weir may not have made the podium in Turin or Vancouver, but his over-the-top costumes stood out as Russians Oxana Domnina and Maxim Shabalin danced to bronze in at the 2010 Games in "Aboriginal" suits.

Two-time Olympic women's champion Katarina Witt's costumes pushed the boundaries of ice fashion, with her skirtless feather-trimmed 1988 costume for a showgirl-themed routine

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US athletes cautioned on team gear outside Olympic venues

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The US Olympic Committee has advised athletes taking part in the upcoming Sochi Games to avoid wearing their uniforms or Team USA logos outside Olympic venues, the State Department said Friday.

The warning came amid growing concerns in Washington over security at the Games and as Pentagon chief Chuck Hagel said the United States would work with Russian authorities on "appropriate arrangements" if an emergency required evacuating Americans from Sochi.

On advice from the State Department, the US Olympic Committee told athletes in a memo not to call attention to their nationality outside the Olympic village as a safety precaution, officials said.

"I think it is just common sense that perhaps if you are an American Olympic athlete, perhaps you don't want to advertise that so much, far outside of the venues," a senior administration official told reporters.

State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said that "we are in very close contact with the US Olympic Committee on issues related to security."

But she added that Russia was not a unique case and that the US government often provides similar advice at "big international events."

The White House has signaled concern over Russia's security preparations for next month's Winter Games in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, with officials privately complaining about Moscow's reluctance to share intelligence on terror threats.

The United States has repeatedly offered to provide help to Russia to ensure security for the event, a question that came up in a telephone conversation between President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday.

But Hagel, speaking at a news conference after talks with his French counterpart, said Russia had not taken up the US offer so far. "Right now, there has been no request from the Russian government."

The Pentagon has announced it is deploying two warships to the Black Sea as a "precaution" in case of a terror attack.

When asked if the US military had contingency plans in place to evacuate Americans in the event of a terror attack, Hagel said: "If we need to extract our citizens, we will have appropriate arrangements with the Russians to do this."

US officials later said that a potential evacuation might not require a role for the military as commercial planes might be used. And in any emergency, American authorities would need to work closely with the Russian government, officials said.

"First and foremost, Russia has the responsibility in responding to and coping with situations that might affect the safety, security and the presence of their guests," a senior administration official told reporters.

"All the American citizens there are their guests," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The US government will work with the Russian government on the various options should they need to be implemented."

As with previous Olympics, Washington has set up an operations center in Sochi with various security experts and a clear "chain of command" that would apply in



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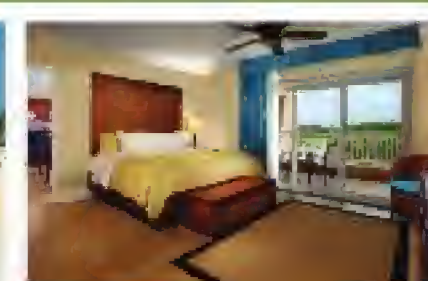
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Wawrinka in dreamland after shock Open win

MELBOURNE (AFP) - Stanislas Wawrinka admitted he was surprised he won the Australian Open and wondered if he was dreaming after his surprise victory over an injury-hit Rafael Nadal on Sunday.

The Swiss, who also upset three-time defending champion Novak Djokovic in the quarter-finals, capped a magnificent fortnight with his 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 win over Nadal for his first major title.

"I still think that I'm dreaming. It's a strange feeling," he said.

"I've seen so many finals. I always try to watch the final of Grand Slams because that's where the best players are playing.

"Before today for me, it wasn't (even) a dream. I never expected to play a final. I never expected to win a Grand Slam. And right now I just did it."

He added: "To beat Rafa, even if he was injured, I think I played my best first set dur-



ing the match. I was ready to play four hours or five to beat Novak in the quarters, to beat Tomas Berdych in the semis."

Wawrinka, 28, became the first player since Sergi Bruguera at the 1993 French Open to beat the two top seeds, Nadal and Djokovic.

He said he spoke with his Swedish coach Magnus Norman about playing in a Grand Slam final, and he was surprised how calm he was at

the start of the match.

The Swiss got off to a brilliant start, taking his first ever set off Nadal in 12 matches and going a break up in the second before the Spaniard's back problem became apparent.

He went two sets up but lost the third as Nadal threatened a comeback, before stepping up to take the fourth set and the championship.

"Magnus told me it was

important not to think about the result but think about the way you want to play, the way you want to win every point," he said.

"I was surprised how well I started the match. In the beginning, he was good, he was fit, he wasn't injured. And I was playing amazing tennis.

"Then there was the second part of the match where I had to stay calm and just to try to stay aggressive because he was injured, but he was still trying a little bit.

"It was not easy. I started to be really nervous because I started to realise that I could win a Grand Slam. But at the end I just came back to the game and focused on what I wanted to do."

Adding spice to his achievement is that Wawrinka has supplanted Federer as the number one ranked Swiss player, a position his close friend has occupied since 2001.

Wawrinka's rise from world number 17 at year-end

2012 to three stems from his monumental fourth round match with Djokovic at last year's Australian Open, which went 12-10 in the fifth set.

Tattooed on his left forearm are the words of Irish poet Samuel Beckett: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better." And Wawrinka has been a model of perseverance.

He lost 14 times in a row before triumphing over Djokovic this week, and also went 12 matches without even taking a set off Nadal until beating him on Sunday.

"The match against Novak gave me a lot of confidence and showed me that I can play on a very high level in a very important match against one of the bug guys," Wawrinka said.

"After the (2013) semi-final at the US Open I knew that I was close to be there. But it still was far away for me to make a final in a Grand Slam.